

Diabetes

TEST YOURSELF

If you have diabetes, which of the following do you need to manage?

- A. Blood sugar
- B. Cholesterol
- C. Blood pressure
- D. All of the above

The answer: D. Some people think only about blood sugar when they think of diabetes. Although watching your blood sugar is important, avoiding diabetes complications also involves monitoring your blood pressure and cholesterol.

WHY BLOOD SUGAR?

Over time, high blood sugar can damage nerves and blood vessels, leading to complications such as blindness or kidney failure. The hemoglobin A1c test measures average blood sugar control over a two- to three-month period. It is normally done at least twice a year, or more frequently if your blood sugar goals are not met. Talk with your doctor to find out what your A1c levels should be.

WHY BLOOD PRESSURE?

Diabetes increases your risk for heart attack, stroke, retinopathy (eye disease), and kidney failure. These risks are even higher for people with diabetes who also have high blood pressure. Controlling your blood pressure can lower your risk. According to the American Diabetes Association, the blood pressure goal for people with diabetes is a reading below 130/80. Blood pressure should be tested at every doctor visit.

WHY CHOLESTEROL?

LDL cholesterol, the “bad” cholesterol, is the primary target for cholesterol management. High LDL cholesterol contributes to plaque that can narrow arteries in the heart. High LDL cholesterol is a serious risk factor for heart attack and an increased risk for people with diabetes. The LDL cholesterol goal for people with diabetes is typically less than 100 mg/dl; this is usually tested once a year.

MANAGEMENT

Your doctor may advise you to change your diet or get more exercise to help control your diabetes. You may also be prescribed medications. Coordinating these treatment activities takes some adjustment but watching your diet, exercising regularly, adhering to medication schedules, and being sure you are having the tests you need are keys to avoiding complications. With support and education, people with diabetes can successfully manage their health and make informed, confident health care decisions.

TAKING ACTION

Making important medical decisions is a responsibility you share with your doctor. You can also call ConnectionsSM Health Management Programs at 1-800-ASK-BLUE for more information and support. Connections Health Coaches are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and will work with you to adhere to your provider's treatment plan.

